

Debating Europe : reflections on EU affairs in the public sphere.

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Stellingen

behorend bij het proefschrift *Debating Europe*

van Patrick Bijsmans

1. Debates about European Union policymaking are already taking place in national public spheres. These debates even include commentaries on and reactions to how issues are being discussed in other Member States.
2. European affairs are often only the focus of media attention after the key decisions have been made – at which point they are often represented incorrectly.
3. There will never be such a thing as a single European public sphere, but rather a multifaceted, ever-changing construct that is engaged with European affairs incidentally and implicitly, but also purposefully and explicitly.
4. Debates in national public spheres, fuelled by national actors, can help to create awareness of, and stimulate debate about, European Union affairs. Yet, this central importance of national actors and the media also contributes to mismatches in timing and content.
5. The contemporary public sphere may not be perfect, but it is certainly more open and democratic than ever before.
6. The European Union's democratic deficit is aggravated by the Union having much greater influence than is often suggested, even in policy fields in which it has no formal competences. Ultimately, decisions may be taken in places other (Brussels) than where the political games are played most openly and intensively (the Member States).
7. Politicisation will benefit the European project, even though it may put a break on further integration at first. Ultimately, it will help to create more awareness about European Union affairs and a more engaged citizenry.
8. Instead of taking steps towards the democratisation of European Union affairs, the regular references to the need to make European policymaking more democratic by government leaders, heads of state, Commissioners and Members of European Parliament may actually exacerbate the issue.
9. The Dutch PhD system, whereby candidates get a formal position at the faculty and are expected to teach and take part in other faculty business, should be maintained.